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CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD:

ITS CLAIMS AND DUTIES,

WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE FRATRICIDAL WAR IN AMERICA.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN

ST PETER'S CHURCH, BELSIZE PARK, LONDON,

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A Sermon,

&c.

" But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbour ? "——St. Luke, x. 29.

That the Jewish doctor, who asked this question of the Saviour, was perfectly sincere, my brethren, we have no reason whatever to doubt. It is the practice of some writers and preachers to regard him as a type of a respectable Jew—cold, punctilious, inflexible, moral ;—and the Saviour's reply as a rebuke to such characters then and always. But surely this idea is a mistaken one. There is nought in the context to warrant any such conclusion. He sought to " justify " himself, we are told ; but all justification of self is not wrong,—is not, I mean, necessarily wrong. It certainly is a great defect in a man to be ready on all occasions to justify himself, as if in his own estimation *he* could not be wrong, whoever else might be; and such men we frequently do meet with in daily life ; but this was not necessarily the characteristic of him who stood up and asked the Saviour the question which I

have chosen for our consideration this morning. He wished to be just—perhaps scrupulously just—and therefore sought from the Divine teacher a solution of that very difficult command of which he had been reminded, viz. to "love his neighbour as "himself." Can it be possible he might naturally have thought, for me to love another as I love myself? Love in the one case is an instinct,—in the other an accident. If I extend the affection to another, I can only do so conditionally. The recipient must have something in common with myself. His preferences and predilections must be in accord with my own. I cannot love an icicle however much I may admire its elegance or its purity; my heart—my whole nature is sympathetic. There must therefore be a reciprocity of feeling and sentiment between myself and another, or there cannot be love. And as this reciprocity does not and cannot exist in all natures (for in some there are instinctive aversions to each other) it is impossible for every man to love every neighbour as he loves himself. Who, then, in the sense of the commandment, *is* my neighbour? Such, doubtless, was the spirit of the lawyer's question, and in the same spirit our Lord directed His reply,—giving at the same time a practical illustration of His doctrine in the case of a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell

among thieves; and who, passed over by those of his own nation, kin, and speech, was left to perish wounded and forsaken by the road side, till a stranger came and ministered unto him,—one on whom the world at that time thought the unfortunate had no claim.

But, my brethren, this was of the essence of the parable,—this question of claim to a stranger's sympathy, and in that sense love. The wounded man had a claim—a natural claim upon a stranger, and because natural, *i.e.* springing from the instincts of a common nature, no difference of religious opinion, of speech, of character, of geographical position could override that claim. And we all feel somehow that this is truth,—essential truth. The moment the idea is suggested our whole nature seems to embrace it. We have an intuitive consciousness that we were not sent into this world to live and feel for ourselves only;—to centre all our affections—affections so capable of expansion—upon one frail feeble being. And over and above this conviction we have another,—that if this claim of neighbourhood exists *as a claim*, it must originate and exist in some principle or attribute of our nature. In a word it exists in our humanity. But, you will say perhaps, humanity is a *sentiment*. True, it is a sentiment, but a sentiment which had its origin in the domestic affections—the peculiar

heritage of mankind,—which grew out of those affections and which still embodies them. Adam learned to love man in his son. His son learned to love man in his father, brother, relative;—his neighbour was therefore his kinsman. Besides, longevity,—a characteristic of the first families of our race, enabled the parent to see his children and grandchildren increase to such an extent, that the family became a people—a people of brothers and sisters and cousins; and so all neighbours were relatives, and the habit of seeing relatives in all men gave permanence to the sentiment which we term humanity*.

Now just see what this leads to. It leads to the idea of family,—of one vast family, all the members of which are bound together by this bond of humanity. And such was obviously the design of the Creator when he endowed man with those attributes which we term the domestic affections.

It gives rise also to another fact, viz. that this neighbourhood or brotherhood or family (for the words here are synonymous in meaning) establishes a reciprocity of interests and personal rights,

* For this argument and also for that drawn from the diversities of men, amplified at pages 7 & 8, the writer is indebted to Professor Vinet, of Lausanne, whose thoughtful "Essays on "the Religions of Man and the Religion of God," have supplied the paragraphs marked by inverted commas.

though over which, we see men so given to dispute as to break the bonds of brotherhood altogether. We find too that there are in the members of this great family, diversities ;—a diversity of character and a diversity of talent among individuals,—a diversity of constitution among races,—and a diversity of position and resources, arising from the spread of the family members over divers regions and climates.

Now this diversity was intended by the Creator to render men *necessary* to one another. It was designed to keep alive the idea of neighbourhood. We all see and feel at the present moment how necessary it is that there should be this diversity of character, talent, position, and resources, and how dependent we are upon each other's diversities for our civilization and our happiness.

But how, then, you may be disposed to ask, did it happen that this one great family broke up into lesser communities which eventually became hostile to one another? My brethren, from these very diversities. Man left to himself abuses everything that is good. It is the natural expression and proof of his fall. He began by degrees to dwell upon the "diversities of men rather than their "resemblances: notwithstanding there were un- "derlying all diversities, the marks by which he "might readily discover his neighbour and brother

" in his fellow man. There was the same " formation of body, the same countenance, faculty " of speech, conscience,—the same sense of " justice,—the same feeling for truth,—the same " belief in a God,—the same need of a God,— " the same sense of a higher life and higher " happiness than that of this world,—the same " hope of immortality."

In all these resemblances were the marks of brotherhood stamped indelibly upon man. But, as I said, he soon learned to dwell most upon the diversities. " Inequalities of rank and wealth, " external manners, opinions, language ;—all these " superficial accidents hid from view the funda- " mental resemblance. Till at last, in these " accidents were sought those claims to brother- " hood, which ought to have been sought for " deeper. The neighbour henceforth consisted of " the parent, the friend, the ally. Particular " groups linked themselves closely together, but " less as societies than as leagues. Men asso- " ciated less out of mutual love, than out of " common hatred. Families strengthened them- " selves against families, classes against classes, " and nations against nations." Such was the state of the world when our Lord delivered the parable which follows upon and answers the question of our text,—" Who is my neighbour ?"

Well indeed might the Jewish doctor have been perplexed at the command to love his neighbour as he loved himself. Well might he have asked "Who " is my neighbour"? Born and educated at a time when the original sentiment of humanity, the divine idea of brotherhood had all but become extinct, the Jew saw only in those who were not Jews, diversities of nature rather than resemblances. Now it was to reclasp this chain of brotherhood around the shattered family of Adam, that Christ the Eternal came down to us in the likeness and nature of man: not in the likeness of any one man of any particular race or age, but of every man who wears and shares the human form. In Him all find a common centre, a common Saviour, a common God. He came to gather together in one mighty fold the children of Adam scattered abroad,—to restore and develop (as a second Adam) that which the Creator had implanted in the first, but which the first in his posterity had lost. And the restoration began like the first creation in development:—a single family small at first, then a gradual increase of members;—one here and another there,—each accession going on multiplying in arithmetical progression;—but all animated by the same hopes, influenced by the same considerations, constrained by the same necessities. With the multiplication of members arose a variety of needs, to meet and

satisfy which, were given by the same Spirit that created the diversities of which we spake in the family of the First Adam, diversities also of gifts in the family of the second. If you turn to St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, you will find the analogy perfect. "To one," he says, "is "given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to "another the word of knowledge by the same "Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to "another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, "to another the working of miracles, to another "prophecy, to another discerning of Spirits, to "another diversities of tongues, to another the "interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh "that one and the self-same Spirit dividing to "every man severally as he will." And note why,—"*that every man may profit withal.*" "For as "the body is one and hath many members, and all "the members of that one body being many are "one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit "we are all baptized into one body, whether we be "Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, "and have all been made to drink into one "Spirit."

Here then, in these two families you perceive a perfect analogy. In the family of the first Adam a common origin, common instincts, common interests; though diversities of character in indi-

viduals, diversities of constitution, of race, of language.

In the family of the second Adam a common origin likewise, common hopes, common necessities, though diversities of gifts in individuals, diversities of ministration, of worship, and of tenet.

If you have followed this argument, my brethren, you cannot fail to perceive in what principle the claim of brotherhood is founded, and why consequently it is, that we appeal to you from time to time in behalf of other members of this one great family of God ;—in behalf of friends near at home ; —in behalf of strangers far away, but whom misfortune, wrong, or common suffering has left upon the road side of life to struggle on in loneliness and sorrow.

A more appropriate subject I could not present to you at the present season. We are on the verge of another winter—a winter when urgent demands will be made upon your bounty in behalf of various kinds of sorrow and wretchedness. You will hear the cry of the widow and orphan whom the dispensations of Providence have thrown upon your sympathy.—You will hear the cry of the manufacturing districts, where, through the lust of political ambition and territorial aggrandizement in one section of the great human family, thousands of our countrymen have been reduced to destitution,

and but for Christian liberality would long since have perished with hunger.—You will hear the cry of neighbourhood nearer home still,—in single parishes, districts, and families; and doubtless, in all these cases you will recognise the *claims* of Christian brotherhood. But it seems to me that we ought to look also beyond the mere limits of home and parish in discoursing on so great a subject as that indicated by our text.

From the influential position which we occupy among the nations of the earth, we ought to take a view of what is going on in other lands,—distant perhaps in geographical locality, but knit to us in blood and parentage, in common humanity and Christian fellowship. Let us not forget that we are not merely members of isolated Christian households or Christian congregations, but members also of a great Christian nation; and surely if Christian sympathy mean anything real, it means that there are *duties* as well as feelings which we owe to others, though strangers to us in vicinage, in respect of this great family tie of Christian brotherhood.

Now, you will perhaps have anticipated me when I say, that of all the wails of woe which the breezes are wafting to us from the different parts of the habitable globe, there is one which has a special claim upon *us*, and that is the wail from brothers

and sisters whom the demon of war has made orphans and widows in the Southern section of the once great and flourishing American Republic. This wail is the cry of a brave, but peace-loving people, praying and striving to be allowed to live in amity and friendship with all the world,—to cultivate the arts of industry and peace; and appealing to us in bleeding hearts for Christian sympathy and succour.

Of this people, though descended for the most part from English ancestors, we know comparatively little. The practical interdiction of direct commercial intercourse with us, on the part of their arbitrary brothers and now implacable enemies, has perhaps been the chief cause of this nescience. But be that as it may, and apart from all questions commercial or political, we do know this;—we know that they are a people who have cultivated in no ordinary degree the domestic affections,—nay, to such an extent as to have inspired a servile race, which *we* originally planted on their shores, with a love and affection for their masters, which have astounded the whole world. We know too that they have Christianized that race; and when we remember that there is scarcely a bondman among the millions there, who might not be free to-morrow if he chose to seek the protection of the invading armies;—and further, that of those whom capture or bribery has carried away, many have gone, like

Onesimus, the friend of St. Paul, voluntarily back to their masters,—we may well believe that there are questions connected with this mighty contest, which we have hitherto very imperfectly understood.

But whatever views we may incline to politically, there is one aspect of the question which I do commend to you, my brethren, and that is the humane—the Christian—aspect. Has there not been slaughter enough, spoliation of property, ruin and devastation enough to satisfy even the Moloch of Republican ambition? Why, if you could stand upon the dome of our Metropolitan Cathedral and count the number of human beings, which shall pour forth to-day from all the churches in this great Metropolis,—that mighty host of well nigh a million of souls would scarcely represent the number of victims which this gigantic war has consumed in the short space of two years! There are among us parents who know what it is to lose a promising son;—there are wives who know what it is to lay the arm, on which for years they leant, in the cold and mournful grave;—there are children who can understand what it is to be deprived of a beloved parent; and we feel that all such afflictions are terrible even when they come in the natural course of human decay or inevitable sickness;—but when as the avenging scourge of an invading army repleted from the dregs of European cities, and for

no other purpose than that the invader may become an overwhelming nation powerful enough to disturb the peace and safety of the world, whenever political considerations shall offer a plausible pretext,—we feel, I say, that death and ruin inflicted thus carry with them a far deeper and intenser sorrow.

I know it may be said, what can we as a sympathising people do to arrest the further effusion of blood? My brethren, let each of the 20,000 PARISHES of England send up to our rulers a request, *as the expression of their Christian feeling*, that the demon of war should now sheathe his fiery sword, and you would hear no more of slaughtered brothers and burning towns. Other nations of Europe, as you know, are not only awaiting our action, but long to follow in our wake and issue the humane decree. But alas! the miserable spell of party feeling in certain quarters has hitherto been too strong for even Christian principles, and sympathy in many has all but dwindled down to apathy. Let each of US, however, in this matter but think for himself, and with the Gospel of God's love in our hands, we shall hardly fail to prove ourselves, in act as well as in name, disciples and followers of the Prince of Peace.

And now let me say, in conclusion, that it is in the exercise of love and friendship and sympathy towards others that we keep our own hearts

warm, our own pulse true. Talk not of affection wasted. "Affection," says a thoughtful poet, "never was wasted,

> If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters returning
> Back to their springs, like the rain
> Shall fill them full of refreshment.
> That which the fountain sends forth,
> Returns again to the fountain."

And so it is of other feelings, other graces. Exercise strengthens, developes, multiplies;—fills the heart, as light fills the world, keeping it warm, and sensitive, and fruitful. Just think what religion would be in man, without man's heart,—exquisite as a system, chaste as the icicle, but a cold beautiful corpse!

Oh, then, brethren, keep your hearts warm. Heap fuel upon the flame, till the radiance and the glow of Christian feeling light up every dark and deep recess. Whether or not others see by the reflection the adumbrations of their own hearts, *you* will thus be living witnesses for humanity and for God,—living witnesses, or, as the Apostle says, "living epistles seen and read of all men," attesting the perpetuity of the Divine command to "love thy neighbour as thyself," by doing unto him as you would have him, in like circumstances, do unto you.

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